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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 003013

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SENV](#) [EAID](#) [KCRM](#) [KGHG](#) [EFIS](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: RUSSIA SLOW TO MOBILIZE ON ENVIRONMENT WORKING  
GROUP COOPERATION

REF: MOSCOW 454 (NOTAL)

Classified By: EST Counselor Deborah Klepp for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Russian working-level coordinator of the Environment Working Group under the Bilateral Presidential Commission told us on December 11 that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) would likely be interested in working with the United States under the Working Group on biodiversity, protected territories, chemical and waste management, environmental governance, technological issues, and climate change. However, the Ministry's leadership is not focused on the Working Group, and the Foreign Ministry has not issued guidance to MNRE on the Working Group's functioning or instructions to formulate an agenda for cooperation. He further cautioned that Working Group projects should first be discussed and developed on the working level. He criticized how the United States developed and presented its recent working-level proposal to jump-start cooperation to reduce black carbon emissions in the Arctic. Since it was not discussed with Russian experts in advance, it was "poorly developed" and stands "no chance" of Russian approval. The MFA's Senior Arctic Official on December 14 was not much more positive, saying the U.S. delegation is welcome to discuss the black carbon proposal at the climate talks in Copenhagen, but should not mention Russia as a possible partner. END SUMMARY.

ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY NOT FOCUSED ON WORKING GROUP  
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12. (C) Andrey Peshkov (please protect), Chief of the Section on Toxic Waste Management and Nuclear Safety in the International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), confidentially shared with us on December 11 the state of play on the Russian side in launching the Working Group. Russia's working-level coordinator for the Environment Working Group of the Bilateral Presidential Commission, Peshkov also serves as chairman of the Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP), a working group of the Arctic Council, and in that capacity has been the chief working-level contact of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in implementing toxic waste cleanup projects in the Arctic. Peshkov claimed it was largely on his initiative that the GOR proposed separating environment cooperation from the Energy Working Group, and he

considers it a victory for U.S.-Russian environment cooperation. Peshkov explained that he is currently the only MNRE official focused on the Environment Working Group. MFA, which is charged with managing the Commission process, has not yet issued guidance to MNRE on how the Working Groups are to function, nor has it ordered MNRE to formulate an agenda for cooperation. Consequently, he said, MNRE has no formal list of priority areas of cooperation or projects to propose.

#### MNRE NOT SERIOUS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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13. (C) Peshkov cited his ministry's leadership as an example of the lack of seriousness with which the GOR approaches environmental cooperation. Minister Sergey Trutnev is largely focused on natural resource management -- i.e., oil, gas and mineral resources. Deputy Minister Igor Maydanov is a former diplomat with little professional background in environmental protection; in his former position as the MNRE's Director of International Relations, he showed little interest in cooperation with the United States. The newly appointed Director of the International Relations Department, Nuritdin Inamov, a former MFA colleague of Maydanov, has no background in environmental protection. (Note: Inamov most recently served as Deputy Trade Representative at the Russian Embassy in Bangkok. End note.) Since November 2, when Alexander Bedritskiy was removed as director of the Russian Hydrometeorological Service (Roshydromet), the country's leading scientific agency on climate issues, no new permanent director has been appointed, and Peshkov said he is not aware of any candidates in the running.

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14. (SBU) Even long-standing experts within MNRE, who could stand to benefit the most from expanded cooperation, have expressed trepidation about creating the Working Group at all. The chief of MNRE's Department of Protected Territories, Amirkhan Amirkhanov, reportedly told representatives of the NGO Wild Salmon Center in the first week of December that the Ministry had rejected plans to create a separate Environment Working Group. Amirkhanov reportedly feared that the Bilateral Commission process would require him to submit his ongoing, and successful, bilateral cooperation programs under Area V of the U.S.-Russia Environmental Protection Agreement ("Wildlife Without Borders") to a bureaucratic approval process and thereby disrupt them. Peshkov told us, however, that Amirkhanov's concerns would not affect the Working Group process. Peshkov said he would ask other MNRE officials to consider incorporating existing projects into the Working Group.

#### AREAS OF RUSSIAN INTEREST

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15. (SBU) Informally, Peshkov said that the Russian side will likely be most interested in cooperating on the following issues:

- Biodiversity;
- National parks and other specially protected nature territories;
- Chemicals and toxic waste management, including mercury and persistent organic pollutants (POPs);
- Institutional issues, including environmental regulations, monitoring, and enforcement;
- Innovation, use of best available technologies, and cleaner production; and
- Climate change.

16. (SBU) Peshkov noted that he included climate change in the

above list only for political reasons. He dismissed the "hysteria" over climate change, saying he believes it is a purely natural process with no significant anthropogenic component. (Note: This is the prevailing view of most of our Russian counterparts, including in the Russian Academy of Sciences. End note.)

¶17. (SBU) Peshkov recommended that, in order to develop a coherent and constructive agenda for the Working Group, groups of leading experts from each side must meet to discuss areas that are of high priority for both sides, and those in which resources will allow for progress. As he understands it, the Russian government views the Bilateral Presidential Commission as a new type of cooperation, in which Russia will be an equal partner in all respects, including financing. Russia will not agree to a project, Peshkov said, unless it is prepared to pay its own fair share of the cost of implementation.

#### MNRE NOT ENVISAGING INTERAGENCY COOPERATION IN EWG

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¶18. (SBU) Several areas of potential environment cooperation lie outside MNRE's ambit. In the area of forestry, Peshkov reminded us, only specially protected forest territories and hunting in forests fall under MNRE's authority. Other forest issues remain under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and its Federal Forestry Service. (Note: Peshkov did not indicate that forestry issues would return in the beginning of 2010 to MNRE, as he expected in July 2009. End note.) Likewise, he said, protection of fisheries falls under the Federal Fisheries Service, which is unconnected with MNRE. Peshkov said that, as yet, he has no intention of reaching out beyond MNRE for interagency cooperation under

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the Environment Working Group; MNRE has no control over other agencies' funding and no authority to direct their programs or personnel, and higher authorities have shown no inclination to encourage such cooperation. Rather, he said, MNRE plans to implement cooperation programs exclusively through agencies under its administrative purview. (Note: MNRE-affiliated agencies include the weather and climate agency Roshydromet, as well as environmental regulatory agency Rosprirodnadzor. End note.)

#### U.S. BLACK CARBON INITIATIVE: OUTLOOK NOT GOOD

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¶19. (C) Peshkov harshly criticized the manner in which the United States approached Russia in early December with a \$3-5 million proposal to cooperate on initiatives to reduce black carbon emissions in the Arctic. Peshkov said that the U.S. proposal, which came from the State Department directly to the GOR Senior Arctic Official at MFA, had not been discussed with MNRE in advance. The proposal, in his opinion, was badly prepared and apparently written without any expert consultation. Peshkov said there is "zero chance" of Russian support for the proposal, as such a project would have required months of serious joint discussion and development. When we reminded him that the April Arctic Council ministerial launched the black carbon task force, he mused, "Maybe if we had started in April..." Ambassador-at-Large Anton Vasiliev, Russia's Senior Arctic Official, was not much more encouraging; on December 6 he told us that the black carbon initiative came as a bit of a shock to Russian officials. On December 14, Vasiliev told us that U.S. delegates are welcome to announce the black carbon initiative at the Copenhagen climate summit, but should not mention Russia as a potential partner in any such announcement. Vasiliev did tell the U.S. Senior Arctic Official that Russia would be able to support the initiative if it is brought into the Arctic Council; however, on December 14 he told us that he did not envision Arctic Council projects being incorporated into the Bilateral Commission.

¶10. (C) Unfortunately, the USG no longer has strong high-level ties with today's environmental policymakers in Russia. Peshkov holds strong -- and sometimes strongly heterodox -- views on environment issues, but he is among our most senior regular contacts within MNRE. His assessment, combined with the second-hand report of Amirkhanov's statement, suggests that MNRE is waiting for further instruction from MFA before launching the Environment Working Group. MFA interlocutors have sarcastically called the Ministry a "black hole," joking that it is easier to get information from Chukotka, the most distant province from Moscow, than from MNRE. So we suggest that EUR DAS Dan Russell request that Ambassador-at-Large Eduard Malayan, Russia's Presidential Commission coordinator, provide MNRE with clear instructions to get moving. But we also would like to provide the U.S. side's Environment Working Group one-pager to MNRE as soon as possible. After the Working Group co-chairs agree on the list of priority areas of cooperation, we endorse Peshkov's suggestion to convene leading experts from both the U.S. and Russian sides in those topic areas to develop specific program proposals in which resources are available.

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